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THREE LECTURES

ON

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD

BY THE

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Three lectures on the
Christian idea of God

FOREWORD.

A well-known Liverpool barrister signalised his year of office as Lord Mayor by starting a Fund to found Annual Lectures on some theological subject to be delivered to the clergy and laity of the Diocese. The first series of these Lectures were delivered in the Cathedral of St. Peter in the summer of the present year by the Bishop of Ely and Canon Masterman. The large audiences which they attracted and the deep interest they excited are a sufficient warrant to the Committee to publish the Lectures themselves. They deal with modern difficulties in modern fashion, and are likely to meet a real need. In an age which has realised the paramount duty of the Church to preach the Gospel to the poor, and which is characterized by an abnormal and feverish activity, there is no slight danger of the Church neglecting men and women of thought and culture, and of leaving them unassisted in their efforts to solve some of the great doctrinal problems by which they are faced. These Lectures are a humble but well considered attempt to supply on a small scale what is needed; and they are sent forth with the earnest prayer that God may use them to help and establish many.

F. J. Liverpool.

SYLLABUS.

I.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD.

Jewish conception of God as (1) Personal (2) One and (3) Holy. Power of development in Jewish theology.

Influence of our Lord's teaching and life. The universality of the Divine love.

The Problem of the Incarnation. S. Paul Christological rather than the theological. S. John's conception of God as Light, Life and Love.

Influence of Greek Philosophy in raising questions, and in developing idea of the Divine Immanence.

S. Augustine on the Holy Trinity.

Age of Scholasticism. S. Thomas Aquinas. The Reformation and Calvinism.

Theology in the nineteenth century. The challenge of Philosophy—Kant, Mansel, Lotze. The challenge of Science.

Summary.

II.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF GOD.

The Personality of God. Personality as Reality, Unity, Purpose, Permanence and Love. Human personality mysterious, and incomplete. "God is Spirit."

The infinity of God—self-limitation. God as eternal.

Personality implies (1) morality and (2) possibility of communion. It makes the Incarnation conceivable.

God as Saviour.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The danger of tritheism. The economic and the immanent Trinity. The Trinity as a timeless relation. The love of the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Logos as the architype of creation. Morality and the doctrine of the Trinity. The appeal to Scripture.

III.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD IN RELATION WITH MODERN THOUGHT.

The object of Philosophy, to reach ultimate realities. Matter and energy now being resolved into ether and motion. These are phases of space and time, and space and time are conditions of consciousness.

The problem of life. Suggestions of a supernatural source.

God and creation. Two-fold relation of God to the world, as initiator and as sustainer. *(Heb. i. 2, 3.)*

Evolution and the new teleology. The interpretation of the lower by the higher. Modern idealism. The teleology of modern Science (Weissman) and Sociology (Kidd).

The intelligibility of the Universe, as suggesting a personal source. The Problem of miracles.

The problem of suffering—the universal law of sacrifice.

The problem of evil—connected with the meaning of time. Evil not eternal.

The Christian idea of God as the foundation of moral effort.

BOOKS.

The following may be specially recommended for further study of the subject :—

Ellicott. *The Being of God.*

Fiske. *The Idea of God* and *Through Nature to God* (Non-Christian Theism).

Hall. *The Doctrine of God* (very valuable bibliography).

Aubrey Moore. Essay on *The Christian Doctrine of God* in *Lux Mundi.*

Rashdall. Essay on *The Ultimate Basis of Theism* in *Contentio Veritatis.*

Moberly. *Personality and Atonement* (on the meaning of personality).

Flint. *Theism* and *Antitheistic theories.*

Illingworth. *Personality Human and Divine, Divine Immanence,* and *The Doctrine of the Trinity.*

Lodge. *Life and Matter.* (A reply to Haeckel).

Lotze. *Microcosmos.*

Masterman. *I believe in the Holy Ghost.*

Caldicott and Mackintosh. *Selections from the Literature of Theism.*

Janet. *Final Causes.*

Caird. *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity.*

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD.

I.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD.

THE doctrine of the Being of God—the central doctrine of Theology—may be approached in various ways. We might, for example, approach it from the side of Comparative Religion—tracing the gradual development of the idea of God from its primitive forms, and finding, in the slow unfolding of more adequate conceptions, the evidence of God's progressive revelation of Himself. But such a task would need vast preliminary study, and the attempt to compress it within three lectures would almost certainly prove impossible. Or, again, we might treat the doctrine of God from the Apologetic standpoint, and ask ourselves how the so-called arguments for the Being of God can be re-stated in the light of modern thought and discovery. Or we might submit to the guidance of the great philosophers, and through the obscure pathway of

metaphysics, find our way at last to the Supreme Good. But I do not propose to adopt any of these methods. I want to start at once with the Christian doctrine of God, and then to look out, from the standpoint of Christian theology, on the intellectual problems of our own time, and show, if I can, that it is precisely in the Christian doctrine of God that these problems are—I will not say solved, but illuminated with a light such as no other idea of God is able to throw on them.

But here, at the very outset, let us remind ourselves that it is part of the claim of the Christian Faith that any true apprehension of God involves a certain moral attitude. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Even human personalities only reveal themselves to sympathetic investigation. So, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." For the next three days we are to "draw near and see;" let us remember the call for "the reverence of unshodden feet," for the place whereon we stand is holy ground.

Our task to-day is to trace the development of the Christian idea of God. And therefore we must begin with the idea of God that the Christian Church inherited from Jewish theology. It would be too large a task to trace the development in Jewish theology of the conception of God that makes the writings of the Evangelical prophet of the exile, and some of the Psalms, the supreme expressions in all literature of human thoughts

about the Divine. We must be content to ask, what were the distinctive features of Jewish theology at its best? Observe, I do not ask what were the distinctive features of Jewish theology at the time of our Lord. For what the Church inherited was not the current and inadequate view of God that belonged to the Judaism of the first century. Guided by the Divine Spirit, the Church appealed from this to the written word, made the Old Testament her own, and so entered into the inheritance of Jewish theology at the highest point of its development.

The Jewish conception of God may be summed up in three words—He is Personal, One, and Holy. Let us examine these three statements.

Hebrew religion was frankly anthropomorphic. Never, even in his sublimest visions, did prophet or psalmist conceive of God as "the inner spirit of Nature" or "the eternal essence and reality of things." Indeed, the tendency of Jewish theology was to contrast God with Nature rather than to identify Him with it. Nature changes and perishes, but God endures. It was only when he turned from Nature to himself that the Jew found, in the depths of his own being, the mysterious impress of the Divine Character. And the Personality of God seemed attested by the records of his national history. For men had asserted that they had consciously held communion with God; and, unless this was a mere illusion, it showed that

there was in the Divine Nature something that made communion possible. After the Restoration, we detect a growing tendency in Jewish theology to think of God as standing above the possibility of direct communion with men, and hence the introduction, in the Targums, of that doctrine of the *Memra*, or Word of God, with which you are familiar. But Jewish theology, at its best, had no doubt at all that the High and Holy One that inhabiteth Eternity dwelt also with him that is of a humble and contrite spirit. It is this strong sense of the Personality of God that makes the Commandment against making images of God so significant. For an anthropomorphic religion has always special need to protect itself against idolatry.

The other danger of anthropomorphism is Polytheism. Hence, in the very forefront of the Jewish system of thought stands the declaration, "The Lord thy God is One Lord." For ages the Hebrews stood alone among all the nations of the world in holding a monotheistic creed. And the history of the Jewish nation in the ancient world, like the history of Islam in the modern world, shows the tremendous force of a monotheistic creed. It cut off the Jewish nation from much of the culture of the ancient world, but it kept it from being absorbed, as the other little peoples of Canaan were absorbed, in the vast Eastern empires that rolled their waves of conquest westward and northward.

But, if there is but One God, then, unless all moral aspiration is a delusion, He must be the Supreme Good towards which all our moral efforts reach up, as plants reach up towards the sun. God is Holy. The whole meaning of the prophetic books of the Old Testament is summed up in that one phrase. The idea of the righteousness of God and that of the Holiness of God are both prominent in Hebrew literature. But the two ideas are not the same. The first had to do with God's relations with men, but the second had to do with the essential Being of God. Righteousness demanded the fulfilment of the law, and had to do with conduct; Holiness was fragrant with the promise of a good that should come down from above, and had to do with character.

Notice one last point about the Jewish idea of God. Greek theology proved itself incapable of expansion to meet the growing moral and intellectual needs of the Greek world. The Philosophers, not the Theologians, become the moral teachers of Greece. After the magnificent effort of Aeschulus, the ethical advance of Greece ceased to be along the way of religion. Now Hebrew theology had just the power of expansion that Greek theology lacked. So the ethical advance of Jewish religion brought with it a corresponding deepening of its theology. New depths of the Divine open out to meet new moral needs.

Such, then, was the inheritance into which the

Christian Church entered. But she took over the theological conceptions of Hebrew thought illuminated and enriched by the teaching and life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By His teaching, first. For while our Lord distinctly gave his sanction to the Hebrew conception of God as One, Personal and Holy, He brought into prominence an aspect of the Divine Nature that had only been seen dimly and rarely by the greatest of the prophets. He taught the universality of the Divine Love.

The idea of God's love for His chosen people was familiar in Hosea, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and elsewhere. But while our Lord's personal ministry was confined to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," He trained His disciples to understand that no racial barriers limited God's purpose of good. It is strange that the early Christian leader who grasped this aspect of the teaching of our Lord most strongly was the one Apostle who had not known Christ after the flesh. To S. Paul this universality of the Divine love seemed the supreme revelation of Christianity—God's great secret, now at last revealed, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs.

But the love of the Divine Father not only transcended all racial limitations, it transcended all moral and social limitations. We must not minimize the startling force of such sayings of the Lord's as "there is joy in the presence of the

angels of God over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance," or this other "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." That goodness should be a passport to the favour of God — that rank and wealth should be the sign of the Divine approval—this men hardly stopped to question, it seemed so obvious. But that God should reach out with undiscriminating love to publicans and sinners—that God should set at naught the claims to respect that belonged to the social order—this did indeed come to men as a new revelation of God. It sent a challenge ringing down human history. It became the motive power of a revolution in the relations of man to man that is even now only in its infancy.

The truth of the universality of the Divine Love was the most conspicuous new fact about God that our Lord taught. There were other truths in His teaching—especially as reported by S. John—that could not be understood till the true significance of His person had been realised, as it was not realised till after His Ascension.

The history of that realisation belongs to the history of the doctrine of the Incarnation. As it gradually became more complete, a new theological problem presented itself to the early Church. The Christian society gave to Jesus Christ the adoration that belonged of right only to God, it taught its members to pray to him as they prayed to God.

But all this belonged to religion rather than to theology. And sooner or later the Church would be obliged to face the question—if Jesus Christ is Divine, are there two Gods?

Of the two great teachers of the Apostolic age, S. Paul's writings are Christological rather than theological. His mind is occupied with practical rather than with philosopical problems. Underlying all his theology is the confident assurance that Jesus Christ is essentially and uniquely Divine, and in his threefold benediction—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," he has given us the fullest conception of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in its economic aspect—ἀγαπη, χαρις and κοινωνια exactly expressing the form in which the threefold activity of the Divine Being touches human life.

But it is in the writings of S. John that we have the earliest attempt to construct a definite Christian theology. In the First Epistle of S. John God is presented as Love, Life, and Light.

God is light, and before Him no darkness can stand; God is love, and in His presence no hatred can live; God is life, and to be cut off from God is death.

Notice how this threefold symbol of God corresponds with those words of our Lord reported in S. John's Gospel.—"I am the way," for I lead from hatred to love; "I am the truth," for I lead

from darkness to light; "I am the life," for he that believeth in Me shall never die.

There is this in common in all the three pictures of God suggested by S. John—they suggest not only self-existence, but also self-communication. Light, Love, and Life convey the idea of an existence that flows forth beyond itself.

The Christian Church went forth to the world with a new gospel; contact with Greek thought turned it into a new theology. For while the Messianic expectations of the time had prepared the way for the gospel in the Jewish world, the Greek came into the kingdom still wearing his philosopher's robes, eager to understand as well as to believe. For he had to meet the questionings of his fellow-thinkers, to show the relation of the new truth to the whole philosophical system that had become a religion to the educated Greek.

it was no easy task that the Church was obliged to confront at the beginning of the second century. She might have turned from it, and fallen back on the demand for faith. From this danger—and it was a very real danger—she was saved chiefly by the great Alexandrian school. Undeterred by the failure of Gnosticism, which had tried to reconcile reason and theology by sacrificing both, Clement, Origen and Athanasius laboured patiently to restate the Christian doctrine of God so as to make it intelligible to the Greek mind.

But the Greek brought into the Christian society something besides his questioning. The Jewish theology of the period just before the coming of Christ had tended to lay increasing stress on the idea of the Divine transcendence. But while the Jew was separating God from the world in his thought, the Greek was merging God in the world, finding in the many the expression of the being of the one. With Pantheism Christian theology could have nothing to do, but the idea of the Divine Immanence was the gift of the Greek world to the Christian Church. Without it, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity could never have been developed along the lines of Athanasian and Augustinian theology.

I do not mean by this that the Christian Church incorporated new ideas from the Greek world, and so arrived at the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. She brought with her the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as a religious truth, and invited Greek Philosophy to find in it the confirmation of its conception of the Divine Reason immanent in the world. The Fathers constantly assert that though reason may find in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity a solution of problems of life that would otherwise remain insoluble, yet that reason could not by itself have arrived at the conception apart from Divine Revelation. They believed in the doctrine because they believed that it was implicit in the teaching of Christ, not because it accorded

with certain lines of Greek Philosophic thought. But, having thus believed, they were not afraid to claim Greek thought as an ally. And no student of the history of thought can dispute the immense service that Hellenic thought rendered to Christian theology in keeping the doctrine of the Holy Trinity from becoming a merely metaphysical truth, unrelated to all the practical concerns of life. As Dr. Caldecott says "whenever Hellenism was weakened in the philosopy of the day, the doctrine of the Trinity retreated into unintelligibility, and was regarded as truth indeed, but less as light-giving truth than as mystery. Whenever Hellenism revived, the purpose of the doctrine was recovered and it resumed illuminative power, as for example with the Cambridge Platonists." It seems to me to be a matter for real thankfulness that we are able to recognise the contribution made by Greek thought to the development of the Christian idea of God. For it would have been a strange tragedy of human effort if the noblest products of intellectual aspiration, reaching up through the dim world after God, "if haply they might feel after Him and find Him," had received from Him who is the Truth no illuminating conception of His truth. And it would have been scarcely less strange if the special truth that God had taught to the Greek Philosophers had been left to perish unharvested by the Christian society.

Of all the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Origen is the

most pregnant thinker in regard to the nature of God. It was He who, by lifting the ideas of "generation" and "procession" above the limitations of time, prepared the way for the conception of the immanent Trinity as against the merely economic Trinity of Sabellianism.

But it was the Arian controversy that compelled the Church to formulate all that she had been realizing in the previous period with regard to the Divine Sonship of Christ. The doctrine of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity was established then on a foundation that remains still unchanged. We may take St. Augustine's great treatise on the Holy Trinity as a summary of the position reached by the Church at the close of the Arian period in regard to the doctrine of the Being of God. Augustine recognizes the difficulty that the Arian controversy had brought out so clearly—the inadequacy of human language to express what we believe of the Being of God. "When it is asked what the three are, human utterance is weighed down by deep poverty of speech. All the same, we say three persons, not that we wish to say it, but that we may not be reduced to silence." The essence of the Divine Being—"this communion or unity or holiness, which links each to the other, is properly called love, for it is written "God is love." And herein may be seen how the Persons of the Deity are three and not more than three: One who loves Him who is from Himself and One who

loves Him from whom He is: and love itself. And in this Trinity is the supreme source of all things, and the most perfect beauty and the most blessed delight."

He illustrates the thought by reference to the special characteristic of love; that it implies a threefoldness. "Love is of someone who loves, and with love something is loved. So here are three things; he who loves, that which is loved, and love itself. What else then is love but as it were a life that links together, or seeks to link, together some two entities—him that loves and that which is loved." The other analogies used by Augustine are more superficial, though not without interest and suggestiveness. It is in the nature of love that he finds the deepest power of insight into the Nature of God. And it is through love that the human mind attains the true knowledge of God.

It had taken the Christian Church more than three hundred years to realize in the region of theological thought the truth that she expressed in the Nicene Creed. Her next task would have been to develop in equal fulness the doctrine of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. But as a matter of fact, her attention was distracted, first by the Christological controversies of the fifth century, and then by the stupendous task of carrying the Christian Faith to the Teutonic tribes that had swept down from the north to build up new

kingdoms out of the ruins of the Empire. I think it would be true to say that not a few of our most difficult controversies to-day might never have arisen if the Church had been able to give fuller content to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

At this point the history of the East and the West diverge. Influenced by the need for enforcing discipline on peoples only half-tamed by civilization, the theologians of the West developed specially the thought of God as the Divine Ruler, though the influence of Neo-Platonic teaching gave to their doctrine that touch of mysticism without which theology becomes sterile.

The special work of the Schoolmen, culminating in the great *Summa Theologiæ* of S. Thomas Aquinas, was to re-state the Christian doctrine of the Being of God in terms of Aristotelian Logic. This attempt produces a certain hardness of outline that may blind the student to the real value of the Scholastic Philosophy. The *Summa Theologiæ* is a mine of suggestive thought. Take, for example, S. Thomas' distinction between those attributes and emotions—such as Anger, Desire, and Sadness —that imply imperfection and therefore cannot be predicated of God, and those emotions—such as Love and Joy—that imply no imperfection, and therefore may be correctly referred to the Deity. Or, again, S. Thomas' demonstration of the Goodness of God, since Goodness is the highest object of desire, and the supreme reality, and the

universal cause of being. Or, again, consider the following, from his demonstration that Evil cannot be in God :

"Evil is opposed to Good. But the nature or essence of Goodness consists in perfection ; the essence of evil therefore is imperfection. But defect or imperfection cannot be in God."

"Besides, anything is perfect according as it is actual, it will be imperfect according as it is deficient in actuality. Evil, therefore, is either privative, or it includes privation, or it is nothing. But that which is the subject of privation is only a potentiality, and potentiality cannot be in God, therefore neither can Evil."

In Aquinas' great opponent, Duns Scotus, and still more prominently in William of Occam, the old danger of the divorce between reason and faith re-asserted itself. It is the supreme danger that Christian theology has been obliged to face at every period of intellectual activity. While the Church has always asserted that the truths of the Being of God have come to her not through unaided human reason but through revelation, she has always, when she has been most true to herself, claimed that reason can verify what revelation has taught. To me, at least, the Schoolmen seem to have carried too far their distinction between natural and revealed religion, though they were sound in the Augustinian distinction between what is contrary to reason and what is above it. For, after all,

Faith itself is a reasonable attitude towards that which is above reason.

The Reformers were occupied rather with the character of the Divine action than with the problem of the Divine Nature. Calvin alone endeavoured to find an explanation of the mysteries of life by a consideration of the Nature of God. And Calvinism, noble as it was in many ways, was philosophically unsound in two directions. For by teaching that there was only one efficient Will in the Universe, Calvin came near to the Pantheistic view of God ; while his idea that the action of the Divine Will was incomprehensible really undermined the sanction for right moral conduct, and made all life a vast speculation.

By a natural transition, the Calvinism of the seventeenth century led on to the Deism of the eighteenth, and so to the Agnosticism of the Nineteenth. Calvinism separated the human from the Divine ; then Deism denied the truth of the Divine immanence ; finally, Agnosticism declared that no human faculties could discern this far-off God.

The history of Theism in the nineteenth century is the history of two great challenges, each of which have served to restore to the Church an aspect of truth that had been lost sight of in the previous period.

The first challenge was from the side of Philosophy. When we remember Maurice's

passionate protest against Mansel's Bampton Lectures, it is interesting to realise that both philosophers were descended from Kant. For Kant's doctrine of the Practical Reason gave Coleridge the basis for his reassertion of the Moral argument for the Being of God. The understanding, judging according to sense, cannot know God, but the Reason, which is the seat of moral truth, apprehends Him by the direct intuition of the soul. That the knowledge of God was a direct intuition of the moral nature, was one of Maurice's strongest convictions, and to a considerable extent he derived it directly from Coleridge.

Meanwhile, Sir William Hamilton was developing the doctrine of Kant in a different direction, and arguing that since the Infinite cannot be conditioned, it cannot be known. In his Bampton Lectures on *The Limits of Religious Thought*, Mansel sought to use this idea as the basis of a new Christian apologetic. Any knowledge of God being impossible to human reason, there remained only what was revealed, and this we could only accept, since verification was impossible. This brought us back to the Calvinist idea of a God of whose moral character we know nothing, and provoked Mill's well known retort: "I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures, and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go." To Maurice, this attempt

to found Christian theology on the basis of Agnosticism seemed a denial of all that made religion possible to him, and I suppose there are few Christian Philosophers now who do not agree that he was right.

With Hegel's Philosophy I have neither the time nor the ability to deal. In the hands of some at least of his leading disciples, the Hegelian Philosophy has become antitheistic. But no study of the Christian doctrine of God in the last century can ignore Lotze. Just as modern economists appeal from the "economic man" of the earlier political economy to humanity as we actually know it, so Lotze appeals from man as a mere thinking-machine to man in the exercise of all the faculties of his nature. It is exactly the appeal of Tennyson's well-known lines :—

> "If e'er, when faith had fallen asleep
> I heard a voice, 'Believe no more'
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep
>
> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath, the heart
> Stood up and answered 'I have felt.'"

If anything that I say in this lecture should lead you to read for yourselves Lotze's *Microcosmos*, I should feel that I had done for you one of the most important services that one man can do for another. His Philosophy of Religion is summed up in three propositions, which he describes as

"the characteristic convictions of every religious mind." They are (1) that moral laws embody the Will of God; (2) that individual finite spirits are not products of nature, but are children of God; (3) that reality is other than the mere course of nature—it is a kingdom of God.

What Lotze did for German Philosophy, Dr. Illingworth has helped to do for English students, in the series of books with which many of you are familiar. I do not think I shall be seriously challenged when I say that the great Philosophic period that began with Kant has achieved a reconciliation of Philosophy with Religion comparable with the reconciliation achieved by the great Alexandrian teachers of the second and third centuries.

But while the Philosophical contest was still in progress, the Christian doctrine of God was challenged from another quarter. Evolution, as a name for the progressive unfolding of the Divine creative work in the world, was a familiar idea to thinkers before the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species. But the Darwinian conception of Evolution, as expounded by Herbert Spencer and Huxley, was an attempt to account for the Universe without introducing a Supreme Being into the process. It was an attempt to prove God unnecessary. Of its failure I shall have more to say in a later lecture. It has had one important result in bringing into new prominence the Christian doctrine of the Divine immanence. We found scientific

thinkers personifying Nature—was it not natural to answer, "What you call nature, we call God?"

We have traversed an immense range of thought. Let us close by summarising what I have tried to say. One nation of the ancient world attained a true view of God in his unity, personality, and holiness. Through this nation there was given a new and larger view of the Being of God in the teaching and life of our Lord Jesus Christ. The message of that life passed at once into the religion of the society that He founded, but its theology developed gradually under the influence of questionings from without, and inadequate answers from within. By the end of the fourth century the doctrine of God had been formulated in the language that the Church still retains. The Schoolmen attempted to define in terms of logic what the Fathers had taught in terms of life. The Reformation broke the framework of mediæval theology, and opened the way for the speculative activity of the period that followed. With Kant began a new school of constructive Philosophy, which developed into Agnosticism on one side, and on the other opened the way for the reassertion of the moral argument for the Being of God, and the profoundly Christian Philosophy of which Lotze is the exponent. Meanwhile Scientific thought ceased to move in an antetheistic direction. And now the Christian doctrine of God is reasserting itself, enriched by the contribution that modern thought has brought to it.

II.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF GOD.

IN my last lecture I traced the development of the Christian doctrine of God, to-day I want to examine the actual content of that doctrine. What do we Christians believe about God?

The foundation truth of Christianity is the Personality of God. Everything that we believe about God grows out of this fundamental fact. By this the whole fabric of Christian thought stands or falls. And the actual contest in which Christianity is involved in our time turns around this claim. It is attacked from two sides. The Pantheistic tendencies of modern thought claim for God a non-personal life as the inner reality of all that we know. Pantheism may use for its God metaphors gathered from human personality, but it will not, and indeed, cannot admit the idea of a Personal God into its system. And on the other side, we are challenged by those who say that the only true name for God's Nature is super-personal—that personality is impossible to an infinite God, and that to understand God as He is, is impossible to infinite intelligences. Before we attempt to meet

these objections, we must understand what we mean by personality. It is an idea that develops with men's growing knowledge of themselves. If we think of God as possessing in their fulness all these qualities and attributes that constitute man a living, self-conscious, rational being, then every fresh insight that we gain into the mystery of our own being is also fresh insight into the Being of God. The last century has carried the analysis of personality further than any previous period. Its ultimate secret still evades us, but the content of the idea has been enriched and enlarged.

There are five characteristics that sum up, I think, what we mean by personality, and they are—Reality, Unity, Purpose, Permanence, and Love.

Without entering into the metaphysical question of what reality is, I think we can all agree that our ultimate standard of reality is our own personal being. I know that I am real, and other entities possess reality for me in proportion as they manifest themselves to my whole self. Then, again, the manifold activities of my nature are, as it were, focused at one centre, co-ordinated by something that I call my *ego* or personal self. Then, thirdly, I associate the idea of purpose with personality. Wherever I find a deliberate adaptation of means to ends I instinctively attribute it to the action of mind and will, and mind and will are forms of personal life. Again, my personality is that in me that persists through all changes of outward

structure and inward development. My identity is a personal identity. And, lastly, love is the action not of any part of us but of our whole being. It is the

> "Feat which done would make time break,
> And let us pent-up creatures through
> Into eternity, our due."

I have not stopped to elaborate these points. They will, I think, carry their own evidence for most of you. Now when I attribute personality to God, I mean that it belongs to the Being of God to possess supremely and completely just these characteristics. God is the supreme reality, and all other reality exists relatively to Him. God is the supreme Unity, the final harmony of the universe. God is the supreme Will and Mind. God is the one permanent entity, from whom all other entities derive whatever permanence they possess. And, finally, God is the supreme love, out of whose infinite Being flows forth ceaselessly the life of the universe. If God could cease to love, the universe would cease to be.

How can I prove this? It cannot be proved *ab extra*. It is the final venture of faith, which, once made, is verified by the experience of life.

But here we must remind ourselves of three facts. Firstly, human personality is deeper and more mysterious than we generally recognize. When Tennyson speaks of "the abysmal depths of personality," he is speaking the simple truth. It is

just because personality is so deep and mysterious a thing that we can dare to regard it as the least inadequate form in which to conceive of the Divine Being. Secondly, human personality, at its highest, is imperfect. When God made man in His image He gave him a partial endowment of that full personality that exists only in God. So when we attribute personality to God we are reasoning from the partial and unfinished copy to the perfect original.

Thirdly, when we say that God is personal, we have not sounded the depths of the Divine Nature. God is far more than our human faculties can grasp or understand. But just as a traveller standing on the shore may gain some real knowledge of the sea, though he sees only to the horizon, beyond which the ocean lies vast and mysterious, so from the shore of human life we may see God truly, though His infinite perfection reaches out beyond all that we can conceive.

Christian theology says that God is personal; it does not say that God is a person. And in saying that God is personal we mean exactly what is meant by the words of Jesus to the woman at the well of Sychar—"God is spirit"—not "a spirit," which is a peculiarly unfortunate mistranslation. For if you try to think of what is meant by Spirit, you will find that it is just what I have tried to express by the word Personality. We know only two classes of entities in the world—persons and

things, and as things are material persons are spiritual. I propose to say more on the relation of matter and spirit in my last lecture; I only want to point out now that when we say that God is spirit, we mean much more than merely that God is immaterial, we mean that God has reality, and unity and permanence and mind and will. The idea of impersonal spirit is one that conveys no real meaning to our minds. I said just now that the objection to the Christian doctrine of the Personality of God came from two sides—from Pantheists and from those who wished to describe the Being of God as "super-personal." With regard to the first, I shall have more to say in my next lecture. But we may deal now with the objection of those who decline to attribute personality to God on the ground that He is infinite, and that personality necessarily implies limitation—the distinction between the me and the not-me. Part of the answer to that difficulty belongs to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, with which we shall deal presently, but part we may consider now. The idea of the infinity of God may lead us to think of God after the manner of the Hindoo theology as mere being divested of all qualities—that of which we can only say that it is. And this is the very antithesis of the Christian idea of God.

We need to beware of all that tends to define God negatively as "the Unconditioned," "the Absolute," "the Power not ourselves." God is

not what is left when we withdraw all that we really know or understand. If this were so, every increase of human knowledge would mean a corresponding narrowing of the frontiers of the Divine. Whereas in fact all knowledge is knowledge of God, all science is the handmaid of theology.

God, to us, is not existence reduced to its bare outline, but existence in its ideal fulness—fulness of life, fulness of love, fulness of joy. And man grows more like God, not by the gradual evacuation of his personal life, till at last even the "will to be" is surrendered, but by the fullest development of every faculty of his nature. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Again, the idea of the infinity of God may lead us to Pantheism. For if God is infinite, there seems no room in His universe for any finite life. It is an easy transition from "God is All" to "All is God."

So I do not think Christian theology will accept without qualification the idea of the infinity of God. The act of creation, and still more the bringing into being of creatures having any sort of will or mind, involves the idea of the self-limitation of the Divine. Space and time involve the idea of a limitation of infinity and eternity, and though the relation of space and time to God is too deep a problem for our minds to solve, yet it would not be

true to say merely that space and time have no existence for the Divine Mind.

I mentioned in my last lecture Mansel's Bampton Lectures. The fundamental mistake of Mansel's position was that he not only attributed infinity to God, but actually identified God with infinity. But while Infinity is a negative conception, Eternity is positive. So, though Christian thought has not learnt habitually to think of God as infinite, there is no name for God more familiar to us than "the Eternal." Indeed, in St. John's theology, "Eternal" is used as practically equivalent to "Divine." So, "eternal life" is the life that God lives, and eternal loss is the failure to attain to a share in the Divine life. There is no thought about God to which men have clung with more strenuous determination than the thought that God is lifted up above the changes and chances of human things.

Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

For deep in us lies the protest of the human spirit against the apparent futility of things—the transitoriness of beauty and gladness. If these things are the light that falls from God as the passing things of life move on beneath His throne, while the realities that correspond to them are in His keeping, then we are content to feel that there is "on earth the broken arch, in the Heavens a perfect round."

Now, if God is personal—and not otherwise—God may be thought of as having a moral character. The argument for the Being of God from the human consciousness of duty is an argument for a God who is personal. For duty and goodness have no meaning apart from personality. Good is not something that God wills, it is something that God is. It has its ultimate sanction, as we shall see, in the Triune nature of God Himself. To be good is to be in harmony with that by which God is Himself.

Again, if God is personal, the idea of communion with God becomes possible. For it is only by a metaphor that we can speak of holding communion with things having no personality. If it is more than a metaphor, it is an assertion of the truth that through the beauty and wonder of the world man can reach out and find God. There is no meaning in religion unless at the heart of the universe there is a Being who can will and know and love. I said in my last lecture that without a touch of mysticism theology becomes sterile. To them that are without we cannot speak of that which, in the sanctuary of our own life, constitutes the strongest argument for the Being of God. He who in his hour of need has thrown himself into what seemed a great darkness and has felt there the strong grasp of the everlasting arms, can never be as though these things had not been. We must not allow ourselves to forget

that though Christianity begins with a venture of faith, it is verified by the test of experience.

The conception of God as personal makes morality and worship possible. But it does something more—it makes the fact of the Incarnation a conceivable thing. For if human personality has its full and perfect counterpart in God, then human personality may become the vehicle of a Divine revelation—then God, in taking a human personality into His very Being, is not introducing into the Divine nature that which is alien to itself.

The Incarnation brings us to a fresh stage in the self-revelation of the Divine. For in the Incarnation, God revealed Himself as Saviour. The Christian Gospel is the gospel of the grace of God. He is the Sun of Righteousness that arises over a sin-stricken world with healing in His wings. Deism conceives of God as standing outside His world, leaving His inevitable laws to work out their own destined end; Pantheism conceives of God as the inner life of the world—of its evil and good, of its suffering and joy. But Christian theology conceives of God as perpetually flowing into the world for its salvation.

And in this idea lies the secret of all moral progress. Every human effort for the salvation of men, every challenge that rings over life's battlefield in the name of God, would be meaningless unless it were the human echo of the Divine passion for salvation.

But what of the issue of the contest? Here Christian Eschatology stands baffled before the darkest problem of life. Can human freewill permanently frustrate omnipotent love?

Perhaps, our only answer is that salvation is not true salvation if it destroys that which it seeks to save. If the whole value of man to God consists in the fact that He can give to God a love that he has the power to withhold, then there must be in man an awful power to resist and frustrate the love of God. Beyond this we cannot see; only this is certain, that the love of God cannot change, and that any man cut off from that fellowship with God which is Heaven must be cut off because, and so long as, he wills so to be.

The Christian doctrine of God culminates in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. And it is important to remember that while the fact of the Triune Being of God was not a human discovery but a Divine revelation, the form in which it appears in Christian theology is the outcome of the efforts of men to define in human language that which transcends all definition. The very word "Person," by which we express the threefoldness of the Divine Being, has changed its meaning from age to age. It is obvious that when we speak of three Persons in one Godhead, we are using the word Person in quite a different sense to that in which we say that God is personal. It is the *persona* of Roman Law that Tertullian had in view

when he used the word. I think it has been retained in Christian theology chiefly as expressing, against Sabellianism, the permanence of the threefoldness of the Divine Being. The corresponding Greek word ὑποστασις has the same idea of permanence. There can be no doubt that the word "Person" has often helped to develop something dangerously like tritheism, as, for example, in that doctrine of the Atonement that represents each of the Persons of the Holy Trinity as occupying a different relation to human sin. The summary of the Creed in our Church catechism is not free from the danger of a tritheistic interpretation. For if the Father is the Creator, it was "by the Word of the Lord that the Heavens were made," and it was the Spirit of God that brooded on the face of the waters. Indeed, the agency of the Son in creation occupies a prominent place in the teaching of the Fathers. And, again, if the Son of God 'redeemed me and all mankind,' not less the redemption was the outcome of the love of the Father, and it is applied to the believing soul by the Holy Spirit. I am sure that Christian theology greatly needs to realise more clearly the fundamental Oneness of God. But, on the other hand, we must not allow ourselves to think of the doctrine of the Trinity as a mere metaphysical conception, having no relation to the practical realities of life.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity presents itself to us first in its economic aspect, that is, it is

the expression of three modes of operation in which God manifests Himself. It tells us of God as transcendent, in the fulness of His self-contained life; of God as the ideal of all finite existence, the Divine thought that in the fulness of time became incarnate; and of God as the giver of Life, that

> "Something far more deeply interfused
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things."

And these Three are One.

Or, to take S. Paul's threefold benediction there is the Love that gives—"the love of God"; and the love that comes—"the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and the love that abides—"the fellowship of the Holy Ghost."

So far we have only reached the Sabellian view of the Holy Trinity. But the Church was not content with this. No conception that merely represented the Holy Trinity as the expression of three successive aspects of Divine revelation could fully interpret the teaching of Christ. These aspects of Divine activity must correspond with deep and permanent realities of the Divine essence. Or, in theological language, the Holy Trinity was not only economic, but immanent. The Church

believed that her Lord had revealed to her something of what God is, not only in His working in the world but also in His essential Being.

It is quite certain that the Church accepted the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, not as a philosophical deduction but as a revealed truth. But, having so accepted it, Christian theology naturally tried to understand its significance in relation to the Being of God. On the inner relations of the Divine nature, the Church has been content to use the language implied in the teaching of Christ without pretending to understand to what realities such words as "generation" and "procession" correspond.

But it was clear that if the three faces (προσωπα) with which the Godhead looked out on the universe also turned inward into the mystery of His own Being, then the self-realization of the Divine might be complete within the Divine nature. If God called into existence beings other than Himself, He did so as an act of free grace, and not as a means of escape from the loneliness of infinite isolation. For God was never alone. There is in the Being of God that of which the human trinity of father, mother and child is a faint copy. God is a Divine Society within which there is a constant interchange of life.

And by carrying the idea of the Holy Trinity into the timeless world to which it belongs, the Church was able to interpret the great phrase of

the Apocalypse, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." All that on its human side was manifested in time, on its Divine side belongs to the eternal mind of God. That is the great truth that gives grandeur to the Calvinist creed at its best. It represents the idea of the Atonement not as a change in the mind of God occasioned by the unforeseen disaster of human sin, but as the inevitable outcome of the character and being of the triune God.

Ere He raised the lofty mountains,
Formed the sea or built the sky,
Love eternal, free and boundless,
Moved the Lord of life to die,
Foreordained the Prince of princes
For the throne of Calvary.

It is doubtful whether the idea of a Personal God can permanently retain its place in religious thought apart from the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Judaism and Mahomedanism may be pointed to as illustrations to the contrary. But Judaism remains a purely national religion, and the bare monotheism of Mahomedanism tends to pass into Pantheism as soon as it attempts to be philosophical.

I do not think that the attempts that have often been made to illustrate the Holy Trinity from human personality carry us very far. Perhaps the most suggestive is the illustration from self-consciousness—the very fact that I am conscious

of myself implying a certain relation between myself as subject and myself as object.

But human personality is limited and incomplete, and needs the external world as a means of realizing itself. God's personality is complete within itself, and if the whole universe could cease to be, the fulness of the Divine Being would be unaffected. But most of all the doctrine of the Holy Trinity interprets the belief that "God is love."

For what is love? It is the reaching out of personality beyond itself towards that self-realization which comes only through self-surrender. Love is the instinctive desire both to possess and to give. And in human life, love is the evidence of the incompleteness of our individual personalities. A man who loves only himself is like the man who has laid up his talent in a napkin—a wicked and slothful servant.

Personality reaches out towards completeness in proportion to the degree to which it loves that which is outside itself. The richest life is the life that loves most. Through the love of wife, child, friend, country, it lifts itself up at last to the love of God, not as an alternative to all these, but as that which includes and transforms them all.

My love absorbs the love before,
My love is deeper passion now,
Though mixed with God and nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

It is necessary to realize all this if we are to understand how the doctrine of the Holy Trinity reveals the nature of God as love. For it tells us that God, as the one complete personality, has no need to reach out beyond Himself for the self-realization that comes through self-communication. It is because love is the deepest fact of the universe that the unity of the Godhead, which is the unity of perfect love, is the deepest unity that our minds can conceive. In God life is love, and love is life.

Nowhere does the teacher realize the inadequacy of human language so fully as when he tries to find words to express such a truth as this. Nothing is more uninspiring than orthodoxy when it is occupied with the task of formulating a body of theological defiitions. Like the steps cut by Alpine climbers in the blank face of the ice-wall, they are of value only for that to which they lead.

One by one we climb them, roped together, as it were, by our membership of the Christian Church, till we come out on the ridge, and before us is all the dazzling world of towering mountains. "The Catholic faith is this—that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity."

For the idea of the Holy Trinity claims, not only our intellectual assent, but the homage of our whole selves. It is a truth to be felt as well as thought. For what it means, in the plainest language, is that God is really alive—that within the Divine Nature there is not repose, but inconceivable activity.

But if God is complete in Himself, needing nothing outside of Himself for the realisation of His complete self-consciousness, what place is there left in the universe for any existence outside God? Must not all else be, as Hindoo theology teaches, illusion? The answer is in the doctrine of the Logos, as the early Fathers expounded it. He who became Incarnate in the fulness of time was from all eternity the Divine Word or Reason, in which was included all that progressively unfolds itself in the manifold life of the Universe. So the love of God for the world is the love of God for that which is the outcome of His own eternal Thought. The artist loves his work because he sees in it the incarnation (so to speak) of his own best self. The father loves his child because that child is mysteriously part of his own being. So the gathering together of all things in Christ is the fulfilment of the Divine Thought and the explanation of the Divine Love.

So the universe is not absorbed at last in a dead "substance," all-pervading, without thought or feeling or joy. The rest of God is not the rest of universal death but the rest of fulness of life. For the doctrine of the Holy Trinity teaches us that union is not absorption. That was the truth that the Church guarded so carefully in her contest with Sabellianism. The word *Homoousios*, though it was received at last into Christian theology, was suspect for long because it seemed to imply a

universal substance in which all distinctions were lost. It was accepted in the end because the confession of three ὑποστασεις in the one οὐσια gave the necessary balance of truth, and enabled the Church to assert that the complexity of the Divine Being was not less fundamental than His unity.

One word more. I said that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was the foundation of moral life. For moral life means nothing less than the reproduction on earth of that which constitutes the essence of the Nature of God. To love my neighbour as myselt means to love my neighbour with the same love as that with which the Father loves the Son. And as the Three Persons of the Godhead are three because they are one—more really three because of the intimacy of their unity—more really one because of the permanence of their threefoldness—so the moral law involves no real sacrifice of individuality. Man is not most truly himself when he is isolated from the general life of humanity—that were to "divide the substance"—nor is humanity most truly itself when the distinctness of the individual lives is merged and lost—that were to "confound the persons."

The relation of individuals to society is the real problem of our own time. The individualist tries to save the individual by restricting the rights of society; the socialist tries to realise social good by the sacrifice of individual freedom. The problem is really due to the fact that our nature has in it

something of the Divine. And God's triune life is both the guarantee of the permanence of individuality and the ultimate symbol of the truth that unity involves inter-relations. Each fulfilled in all, and all fulfilled in each, is the Divine ideal of humanity.

I have tried to state the Christian doctrine of God as it can be "proved by most certain warrant of Holy Scripture." Nothing is more striking in the works of the great Christian Fathers than the resoluteness of their appeal to the Holy Scriptures. They were Philosophers, but they were first of all expositors. And so, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, acting through the moral life of the Christian society, the words of the Bible gathered fulness of meaning. Just as Science reads the book of Nature with growing insight, and formulates certain dogmas that the student of Science must take on trust; so, Dogmatic Theology was the outcome of the attempt to formulate what the Church had learned to understand by reverent study of the Scriptures.

Neither in Science nor in Theology can the individual reproduce the whole process by which men of the ages before him reached the truths that he inherits. But he has a right to expect to find that the dogmas that he accepts shall accord with and interpret the facts of the world as he gradually learns to know them.

So we must turn in our last lecture to the facts of life as modern research and thought have tried

to understand them, and ask ourselves whether the Christian doctrine of God gives us the true standpoint from which to look out on the moral and intellectual problems of our own time. For a religion that claims to be absolute must abide the challenge of each age's peculiar needs.

III.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD IN RELATION WITH MODERN THOUGHT

THE aim of all Philosophy is to reach ultimate reality—and, therefore, the aim of all Philosophy is to find God. Hence the goal of Philosophy and of Theology is the same, though they approach it from opposite sides. Philosophy starts with things as they are, or appear to be, and reaches through phenomena towards the truth; while Theology starts from God, as the supreme venture of faith, and seeks to interpret nature and human affairs in the light of what she believes to be the revealed truth of His Being. Obviously, therefore, if both are moving along right lines, they must meet, though the journey may be long that each must take before that meeting-place is reached. I believe that for the last twenty years modern thought has been moving steadily in a Christian direction, and that the Christian doctrine of God has been strikingly vindicated by the most recent achievements of Science and Philosophy. It is this proposition that I want, if I can, to illustrate in this last lecture.

I said that the aim of all Philosophy is to reach ultimate reality. Monism—the doctrine that the ultimate reality is one—is almost a postulate of Philosophy. Monism may be Materialistic—that is, it may accept matter as the ultimate reality, and attempt to explain all phenomena in terms of matter. Or it may be Idealistic, and attempt to interpret all else in terms of Spirit—that is, of mind and will. Or it may attempt to interpret spirit and matter in terms of some assumed unknowable "substance" or reality that is neither. Of these three, the second alone is consistent with the Christian conception of God.

Science used to postulate matter and energy as the two permanent realities of the world of nature. But recent discoveries have, at least, suggested that matter and energy may themselves be resolvable into ether and motion.

So far Physics may bring us. And at this stage Metaphysics takes up the enquiry. Is ether, after all, anything more than a name for space? Is motion anything more than a name for time? Shall we say that the ultimate realities are time and space? But time and space are, as far as we can understand them, conditions of consciousness. They are conceptions of a Mind. And if I may not think of them as merely conceptions of my own mind—and there are grave difficulties in so regarding them—then I must think of them as conceptions of the Infinite Mind—as thoughts of God. We

start, then, from time and space as thoughts of God. But empty space and motionless time are phrases to which our thinking selves can give no meaning. So a "substance" called ether, of which we know as yet practically nothing, and a process called motion, of which we know as little, seem to be involved in the thought that brings time and space into being. Motion and ether gives us the electrons that appear now to be the component units of the atom, which is itself the component unit of matter and also the storehouse of energy. So the ladder that reaches from the Mind of God to the universe of created things seems to be setting itself up before our eyes. At least, we have travelled a long way from the materialistic Monism that lay like a dark shadow over English thought less than a generation ago.

But what of life? We know of it only in connection with matter, yet we believe that it has an existence apart from matter—we believe that it is the form in which the Divine activity manifests itself in the world. God only "has life in Himself;" all other existences live by a derived power of life. Nothing that Science has yet discovered is inconsistent with the view that life comes into the natural world from a source outside it, to which it returns with the dissolution of the material organ that it had constituted and sustained. Even if Science teaches us hereafter how to bridge the gulf between organic and inorganic matter, we

shall only have learnt what are the conditions under which this mysterious power can be called into exercise. To use a crude illustration, a child may learn to touch the switch that lights its nursery with electric light, but that does not mean that the child has learnt how to make electricity, or what electricity is.

These preliminary thoughts bring us to the problem of the relation of God to the universe. That relation is twofold. He is (1) the originator and (2) the sustainer of all things. Notice the two phrases from the great Christological passage at the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "By whom he made the æons"—the ages of world history in their successive order; and "Bearing on the whole by the word of his power."

The real significance of the argument for a first cause has not been affected by anything that modern science has taught. For it is not so much the structure of the world as the constitution of our minds that justify the demand. We are so made that we cannot find rest in the contemplation of an everlasting process of change. It is not merely matter but time itself that involves the idea of causation—that throws us back on some cause beyond itself. It is significant, in the verse that I quoted just now, that God is spoken of as originating "the æons"—that is, the world conceived of as a succession of ages. It is worth while to remember that when we speak of time as

beginning we are speaking in terms of paradox. For Eternity knows of no beginning or end. Yet it is as a time-process that the universe comes into being. "God said, let there be light; and there was light." Then the time-process begins. "There was evening and there was morning, one day."

But though we must think of creation, in one aspect, as "one act at once," yet in another aspect it is a continual process, a growth. So we have the conception of the Divine Logos as "bearing on all things" to their appointed fulness "by the word of his power." It is quite time that we got rid of the old idea of evolution and special creation as alternative views. Nothing can come to be unless God has thought and willed it. He thinks and wills the whole in the completeness of its ultimate fulfilment, and that Divine Thought became incarnate in the fulness of time that He might restore the lost relation between the actual and the ideal. But He also thinks and wills each separate detail of the great design, and the will of God, which is the Spirit of God, is the "giver of life" immanent not only in all but in each, without whose presence the organic structure of the universe would perish in chaos and formless dissolution.

So far, then, from having any cause to fear the evolutionary conception of the making of the world, Christianity has every cause to welcome it. For it has brought back God into more intimate and continual relation with the world.

Instead of thinking of the universe as a machine that God made and set going ages ago, we may now think of the universe as a thing that God is still making.

He dwells in all
From life's minute beginnings up to man.

For we have learnt to interpret the meaning of evolution not from the standpoint of the lower but from the standpoint of the higher. The primitive germ-cell becomes more wonderful as we realise that it contained within itself all the potentialities of a world of living creatures, with man at their head. The evolutionist is perpetually asking himself, not "what is this?" but "what is this becoming?"—"into what higher form is it developing?" He has learnt to think of the world of nature as moving forward, through labour and effort, towards something still ahead. Survival, at first a purely physical fact, takes on first an intellectual and then a moral character. Steps once gained are not lost; environment attains a wider meaning as the living organism develops new faculties and reaches out further beyond itself. Manifestly, we are face to face with a new teleology, greater and more far-reaching than the old. If the argument from particular cases of design has lost something of its force, the argument from the purposefulness of things has gained immeasurably. Evolution explains the τα παντα of Heb. 1, 3—

all things brought into unity by the common purpose that is behind them. That all this process of development should be the outcome of a million bare chances is a conception that rational thought cannot entertain.

Evolution has taught us to interpret the lower by the higher—to ask of every rudimentary organism—what is it capable of becoming? But this was exactly the way in which our Lord thought of men. He saw them not only as they were, but also as they were capable of becoming. And by presenting before them the ideal of humanity united with God he called them to a new process of evolution whose goal lay beyond time in the eternal life of God. So in the person of redeemed humanity the creation comes back at last to the Father's House, not that it may be merged in the Divine and so close the whole great process in futility, but that in some unimaginable way the life of God may be richer through all the going forth of Mind and Will of which redeemed humanity is the final issue.

The restatement of Scientific truth in terms of evolution is one marked feature of modern thought; another is the revival of Idealistic Philosophy—a revival of which T. H. Green, of Oxford, was one of the earliest leaders in England. It is obvious that the conception of matter as existing "in and for mind" leads much more directly to the Christian idea of God than any scheme of

Philosophy that affirms the independent reality of matter, or attempts to resolve both matter and mind into some unknowable substance. The bearing of Idealistic Philosophy on Theism is very clearly stated in Dr. Rashdall's essay in *Contentio Veritatis*, though I am not quite sure that the extreme idealism of Berkeley may not lead more directly to Pantheism. It does not seem to take sufficient account of the fact that matter is not only the thought of spirit, but the vehicle of communication by which mind normally communicates with mind. So in the sacramental system of the Christian society, and supremely in the Incarnation, matter becomes the vehicle of communication, not only between man and man, but also between man and God. I have sometimes thought that when our Lord took the bread and wine that lay before him on the table, and said to his disciples, "this is my Body;" "this is my Blood," he meant them to understand that all the material things that ministered to men's need were part of that wherein the Logos clothed Himself—and so that the material creation in all its wonder and beauty, "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God," shall at last be made one with the glorified Body of Christ.

I have only time to notice one other interesting characteristic of modern thought—I mean the tendency illustrated by Weissman in the region of

biology and by Mr. Kidd in the region of Sociology, to shift the centre of gravity (if I may so express it) to the future. According to this view those organisms or social groups survive in the strugle for existence that are best able to subordinate the present to the future. But this implies guidance by a higher intelligence that knows the future, and so brings us back to the Christian idea of God.

Passing from these special phases to the general trend of modern scientific thought, let us see how it bears on the Christian idea of God.

A recent writer, summarising the tendencies of Scientific thought in the last century, says—"Exact or scientific thought assumes that there exists in Nature an intelligible Order . . . But if the idea of Order underlies all scientific thought, standing, as it were, at the entrance of scientific reasoning, there is another idea which stands at the end of all scientific thought. This is the idea of Unity in its most impressive form as Individuality. It remains over as an ultimate empirical fact to which scientific reasoning advances, of equal importance with order."

Scientific thought, according to this writer, begins with assuming Order and ends by reaching, or at least reaching after, Unity—the unity of which individuality is the only adequate expression. Now, consider the bearing of these facts on the Christian idea of God. Why do we assume that

the world has an intelligible Order? I suppose the answer is—because we find it so. But in that case, is not the inference unavoidable that the universe is the product of a mind akin to, though vastly greater than, our own? I do not think the argument from the intelligibility of the world has been given as prominent a place as it deserves in the work of Christian Apologists. And if the order of the world points to a mind, the unity of things inevitably suggests the only real centre of unity that we know—a personality. Order suggests the creative activity of God acting on the world from without, while unity suggests the Divine Presence working within the world of created things as the inner life of all that lives.

And in the intelligibility of the world I would include its beauty. Beauty is a bye-product of the process of evolution, but all the more for that reason it seems to tell of the gladness of God in His creative activity. But there is no beauty in things apart from the eye that sees and the mind that understands. So beauty is sacramental—it is the consecration of the material to a spiritual purpose. But such consecration implies a consecrator. No theory of natural selection can account for the fact that

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Irreligious science is hard to understand; but irreligious art is almost a contradiction in terms.

I suppose most men who think at all have been conscious sometimes of the overwhelming sense of insignificance that is awakened by the contemplation of the vastness of the universe as it is unfolded to us by modern astronomy. Not to be conscious of such a feeling is to confess oneself deficient in all the higher faculties of imagination. Yet here, modern science comes to our rescue. Spectrum analysis is teaching us that the whole universe is, so to speak, of one texture ; mathematical calculations are teaching us to recognise that it is subject to one law. And so, instead of finding ourselves aliens in an unintelligible universe, we are like children who have just discovered that outside our nursery door there are, not the terrors of the unknown, but all the other rooms and corridors of our Father's house, full of new and wonderful things.

The question of miracles is too large to enter upon in any detail. The Christian idea of God involves the recognition not only of the possibility but also of the fact of special intervention—not of lawless and unintelligible intervention, but of such intervention as shall accord with and explain the Divine character. Unless I misread the drift of modern scientific thought, the possibility of such intervention will not be denied now as it was denied a generation ago. For we have learnt to recognise that the natural world is more complex than we once thought, and we have learnt to think of the

uniformities of nature as (if one may so express it) habits of the Divine Mind and Will rather than as laws imposed by God on Himself. The Christian idea of God demands that every alleged miracle shall be tested by a moral standard. It is inherently improbable that the Divine intervention should take a grotesque or trivial form; it is inherently impossible that it should be immoral or cruel or unjust. But I do not think that contemporary scientific thinkers would assent to the proposition that miracles cannot happen, or even to the assertion that "miracles do not happen."

But there are two problems, old as human life, that modern thought has brought into new prominence—and they are the problem of suffering and the problem of evil. The problem of suffering is perplexing the minds of many thoughtful men in our own time. There are two special reasons for this. One is the growing sensitiveness to suffering that is, I must believe, a result of kindlier sympathy among men. The other is the realisation that, if the Darwinian conception of evolution is true, suffering is no accident, but is, so to speak, involved in the structure of the universe. And much of it seems needless and futile. Men will accept suffering that leads to some definite achievement as not irreconcilable with the idea of Divine benevolence. But it is the suffering that ends in what seems futility, the apparent recklessness of nature, that constitutes the real problem. Evolution presents

the history of the universe as a savage struggle, in which only a fraction of the combatants survive. And social evolution follows the same law. It is only the remnant who return and come to Zion ; all the track across the desert is strewn with the forms of those who have fallen by the way.

We cannot give an adequate answer to the challenge till we know far more than we know at present of what life is. When the minutest organism dies, does its life perish, or does it go back into some great storehouse of life? We do not know.

But if we adopt the principle of interpreting the lower by the higher, we can lift from the problem of suffering the darkest cloud that overhangs it. For we can show that there is that in the very Nature of God that gives meaning to the idea of sacrifice. Love is giving. Within the Divine Nature it is the unchecked outflowing of self-communication. But when some obstance checks the flowing-forth of love, then love takes the form of sacrifice.

And sacrifice is the meeting-place of suffering and gladness. There is deep insight in those lines of Browning :—

" I think this is the authentic sign and seal
Of Godship that it ever waxes glad
And more glad, until gladness blossoms, bursts
Into a rage to suffer for mankind
And re-commence at sorrow."

It is because the Christian man believes that the law of suffering has its ultimate justification somewhere in the mysterious depths of the Divine Being, that he can reconcile the goodness of God with the actual suffering of the world. In some way that we do not understand, every minute organism that perishes in the process of evolution is fulfilling the law that finds its supreme fulfilment in the Cross—the law that he who loses his life shall find it.

Yet Christian theology says that God is *impassibilis*—incapable of suffering. How is this consistent with the truth of the Incarnation? Is it not, in fact, the real explanation of it? The supreme gladness of God is in self-communication, in that outflowing of His own Being by which each Person of the Holy Trinity is fulfilled by the completeness of self-identification with each. God could only suffer if it were conceivable that a barrier could be interposed to that fulness of intercommunication. And in some mysterious way I feel that such a barrier was involved in that condition of human life with which the Son of God identified Himself. I cannot evacuate of meaning such words as "He was made sin for us who knew no sin." So, though *sub specie eternitatis* God cannot suffer, *sub specie temporis*, in as far as He condescends to accept the limitations of the temporal, He can and does suffer. You can see the same process reversed in the exultation of the martyr.

He whose eternal Being is fulness of joy, in the life of time is content to suffer ; so the martyr whose life in time is acutest suffering, realizes in the consciousness of the eternal something of this fulness of joy.

The problem of suffering leads on naturally to the even more perplexing problem of sin. If moral evil exists in a world that is the realisation in time of the Thought of God, must not the sense of moral responsibility of which most men are conscious be an illusion ?

> Thou who didst with pitfall and with gin
> Beset the path I was to wander in,
> Thou wilt not with predestination round
> Enmesh me, and impute my fault to sin.

To deal with this problem we should need at least a course of lectures. I dare not even launch on it now beyond saying that I am sure the solution —as far as any solution is possible—lies somehow in the relation of spirit, which is normally timeless, to time. I cannot explain what I mean very clearly because I do not see it very clearly myself, but I should start from the fact that sin has no place in eternity. I do not say that the results of sin may not have an eternal significance—I do not say that there is no *damnum eternum*—but I do say that the particular disease of the Will that we call sin is connected with the fact that we are in time and yet above it. In the process of translating the

Eternal Thought of God into terms of time, there is somehow involved this consequence that it becomes possible to spiritual beings to seek for self-expression, not in reaching up through the temporal to the eternal, but in identifying ourselves with the temporal. So, to use Browing's phrase, "so much soul is wrecked in time."

As this is merely a theory of my own, thrown out for your consideration, I will not attempt to develop it further. Probably at the end we should be obliged to confess that moral evil remains still an insoluble mystery. But though it would be idle for us to pretend that we can explain moral evil, we have another answer to the impeachment of God based on its presence in the world. It is the answer involved in the great phrase "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." If we could prove that God acquiesced in sin, recognised it as having a rightful place in His scheme of things, then the foundations of the moral law would be shaken. But the Christian idea of God conceives of the Divine as foreseeing sin only to go out against it with all the armies of Heaven. The foundation of the moral law rests on the challenge of God "Whom shall I send and who will go for us," and on the response of every true-hearted man "Here am I, send me." Every human effort to fight against moral evil is part of God's implacable war against sin. And it is exactly in proportion as a man identifies himself

with this Divine warfare that he becomes sensitive to the manifestations of the presence of God.

Moral enthusiasm is often a more direct road to God than intellectual enquiry. For the glory of the Christian gospel lies in this, that while it can meet the profoundest speculations of Philosophy with truths more profound, and interpret the inductions of science with inductions wider and more universal, it can carry to little children the assurance that they have a Father in Heaven.

It is worth while to remind ourselves that the faculties that make a man a great scientist or philosopher, are not necessarily those that make him a great theologian. A geological expert may be quite unqualified to pronounce judgment on a great picture or poem. It does not follow, because a man is able to speak with authority on one special department of learning, that his verdict on theological questions should be accepted as authoritative. All avenues of knowledge lead to God, but at the end of each there is a door that opens only to the key of moral aspiration. And there is no deeper tragedy in the history of human thought than the tragedy of the man who has patiently travelled the long journey and stands baffled at the end because he has lost the key of the door behind which God stands waiting. To such comes the old message of the Master "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God."

There is one last test to which we may bring the various conceptions of God that have occupied men's minds—and that is the test of their influence on conduct and character. It is a valid assumption that the conception of God is most likely to be true that provides the most effective incentive to men to develop their best selves. For all forms of theism recognise human aspirations after goodness as among the strongest arguments for the existence of God.

The alternate really lies between Pantheism and Christianity, for Polytheism is an impossible creed for a thinking man to-day, and Deism only survives as an unphilosophical and imperfect form of Christianity.

A good deal of modern pantheism is merely, as Dr. Illingworth calls it "materialism grown sentimental." But it appears also in much more subtle forms, as for example, is the Hegelian idea of evolution as the process by which God is growing into self-consciousness. Now what kind of incentive does Pantheism provide for moral effort? It generally goes with a determinist conception of humanity; it regards sin as a mere negation; it looks forward to the ultimate merging of all other entities in one formless ocean of life—or shall we say, of death. It is in sympathy with the mystical idea of self-surrender, which is really self-annihilation. Is it not clear that such a conception of God must, in the end, stifle real moral effort?

In contrast with Pantheism, Christianity begins by setting God outside and above all the universe of created things. Here the human mind can rest at last in the realization of a Being Who does not change with the changes of His Universe, or decay as His worlds decay, Who needs nothing for the completeness of His life except perhaps more scope for giving. So the foundations of the world are laid in the law of sacrifice. In a very real sense creation is the beginning of the incarnation. For creation is the condescension of the Divine to such limitations as shall make possible existences that are, in a sense, outside His own—that have some kind of being of their own. Yet "in Him they live and move and have their being." He guides His world not from without but from within, and he leads it on towards a moral life that shall be capable of communion with His own. It does not help me to be told that I am part of God, and that the human thirst after God is the desire of the part to become lost in the whole; but it does help me to realize that the vast cosmic process that lies behind my little personal life depends for its fulfilment on my willingness to seek in God the full development of all that I was designed to be. For in the Christian idea of God I find the complete reconciliation of what seem in human life irreconcileable alternatives—the ideal of self-realization and the ideal of self-surrender. I see that in the very Being of God self-realization is complete in the completeness of perfect self-surrender.

The Christian ideal is not the isolated perfecting of each individual life, till we all come to perfect men ; but the fulfilment of each life in relation to the life of the whole society, till we all come unto a perfect man. So that the unity of redeemed humanity shall be a unity like the Unity of God, while the permanent identity of each life within that unity shall be like the permanent tri-personal life of God. The true incentive to moral effort is the contemplation of the Being of God.

And lastly, the Christian idea of God keeps theology and religion in their right relation to each other. You may have an irreligious theology that substitutes intellectual orthodoxy for personal devotion—and that way lies moral bankruptcy ; or you may have a non-theological religion that is willing to worship but unwilling to make any effort to understand—and that way lies intellectual shipwreck. Or you may have an attempted delimitation of territory by which a man's theology and his religion are prevented from interpenetrating each other. But the Christian idea of God demands a twofold response—it calls us to see and to know—to see, because God has revealed Himself so that they who seek Him can find Him—to know, because our moral nature can enter into the secret places of His presence, and know Him as a man knoweth his friend. We have no right to remain unresponsive to either call. To attempt to worship without a corresponding effort to understand is,

after all, to set up another altar "To an unknown God." By any such altar the Christian teacher must speak the old message of the apostle "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare we unto you." For in the long run, it is by the conception of God that we present to the world that Christianity must depend for its power to influence and control human lives. And therefore we must reclaim for theology its old position as the queen of the sciences; we must convince men that anger and clamour and evil speaking and malice have no place in the great quest to which all knowledge ministers; we must look out from among us men trained in the power of thought and set them the task of meeting the perplexities and questionings of our age, not with new gospels but with such re-statements of the old truth as shall make clear its permanent validity. We are face to face with a great opportunity. God give us grace to know the time of our visitation.

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